

CLAIMS

1 1. A method in a computing system for assessing, for a selected electronic
2 advertiser having a web site and each of a plurality of electronic publishers each also having
3 a website, a measure of the desirability of placing with the electronic publisher one or more
4 advertising messages for the selected electronic advertiser, comprising:

5 for each of a plurality of users, storing a user identifier on a computer system
6 used by the user;

7 when one of the plurality of users visits the electronic advertiser website,
8 receiving and storing an indication of a first type indicating that the user visited the
9 electronic advertiser website, the indication containing the user identifier stored on the
10 computer system used by the user;

11 when one of the plurality of users visits the website of one of the plurality of
12 electronic publishers, receiving and storing an indication of a second type indicating that the
13 user visited the electronic publisher website, the indication containing the user identifier
14 stored on the computer system used by the user and an identifier of the electronic publisher;

15 selecting the user identifiers contained in stored indications of the first type;

16 determining the number of unique selected user identifiers;

17 for each of the electronic publishers,

18 determining the number of selected user identifiers that are contained in at least
19 one indication of the second type that also contains an identifier of the electronic publisher to
20 obtain a count for the electronic publisher;

21 dividing the count for the electronic publisher by the number of unique selected
22 user identifiers to obtain an inclination metric for the electronic publisher;

23 analyzing the inclination metrics obtained for the electronic publishers; and

24 selecting one or more of the electronic publishers on which to place an
25 advertising message for the advertiser based upon the analysis.

1 2. A method in a computing system for assessing, for a selected advertiser
2 and each of a plurality of candidate advertising outlets, a measure of the desirability of
3 placing with the candidate advertising outlet one or more advertising messages for the
4 selected advertiser, comprising, for each of the plurality of candidate advertising outlets:

5 identifying a plurality of users that have visited the candidate advertising
6 outlet;

7 counting the number of identified users that have also visited the selected
8 advertiser; and

9 generating for the candidate advertising outlet a metric that compares the
10 number of identified users to the number of counted users and constitutes a measure of the
11 desirability of placing with the candidate advertising outlet one or more advertising messages
12 for the selected advertiser.

1 3. The method of claim 2 wherein the candidate advertising outlets are web
2 publishers.

1 4. The method of claim 2 wherein the candidate advertising outlets are
2 Internet publishers.

1 5. The method of claim 2 wherein the candidate advertising outlets are
2 electronic publishers.

1 6. The method of claim 2 wherein the metric is generated by dividing the
2 number of counted users by the number of identified users.

1 7. The method of claim 2 wherein the counting counts the number of
2 identified users that (a) have also visited the selected advertiser and (b) have not viewed an
3 advertising message for the selected advertiser,
4 and wherein the metric is generated by dividing the number of counted users by the number
5 of identified users.

1 8. The method of claim 2 wherein the counting counts the number of
2 identified users that have also visited the selected advertiser without first viewing an
3 advertising message for the selected advertiser,
4 and wherein the metric is generated by dividing the number of counted users by the number
5 of identified users.

1 9. The method of claim 2 wherein a related advertiser is related to the
2 selected advertiser,
3 and wherein the counting counts the number of identified users that (a) have also visited the
4 selected advertiser, (b) have not viewed an advertising message for the selected advertiser,
5 and (c) have not viewed an advertising message for the related advertiser,
6 and wherein the metric is generated by dividing the number of counted users by the number
7 of identified users.

1 10. The method of claim 2 wherein a related advertiser is related to the
2 selected advertiser,
3 and wherein the counting counts the number of identified users that have also visited the
4 selected advertiser without first (a) viewing an advertising message for the selected advertiser
5 or (b) viewing an advertising message for the related advertiser,
6 and wherein the metric is generated by dividing the number of counted users by the number
7 of identified users.

1 11. The method of claim 2 wherein the counting counts the number of
2 identified users that (a) have also visited the selected advertiser and (b) have viewed an
3 advertising message for the selected advertiser,
4 and wherein the metric is generated by dividing the number of counted users by the number
5 of identified users.

1 12. The method of claim 2 wherein the counting increments the count for
2 each identified user that (a) visited the selected advertiser and (b) has viewed an advertising
3 message for the selected advertiser and decrements the count for each identified user that (c)
4 visited the selected advertiser and (d) has not viewed an advertising message for the selected
5 advertiser,
6 and wherein the metric is generated by dividing the count by the number of identified users.

1 13. The method of claim 2, further comprising displaying the generated
2 metric for each candidate advertising outlet.

1 14. The method of claim 2, further comprising:
2 analyzing the generated metrics; and
3 selecting a candidate advertising outlet on which to place one or more
4 advertising messages for the selected advertiser based upon results of the analysis.

1 15. The method of claim 2, further comprising discerning users that have
2 visited the candidate advertising outlets and those that have visited the selected advertiser by
3 analyzing the contents of logs of one or more web servers that collectively receive a request
4 when a user visits one of the candidate advertising outlets and when a user visits the selected
5 advertiser.

1 16. The method of claim 2, further comprising discerning whether a user
2 has visited the candidate advertising outlets and whether the user has visited the selected
3 advertiser by analyzing information traffic flowing to or from the user.

1 17. The method of claim 16 wherein the analysis analyzes universal
2 resource locators contained in the traffic.

1 18. The method of claim 16 wherein the analysis analyzes filenames
2 contained in the traffic.

1 19. The method of claim 16 wherein the analysis analyzes content contained
2 in the traffic.

1 20. The method of claim 16 wherein the analysis analyzes textual content
2 contained in the traffic.

1 21. The method of claim 16 wherein the analysis analyzes visual content
2 contained in the traffic.

1 22. One or more computer memories collectively containing an advertising
2 outlet inclination data structure, the data structure containing information indicating, for a
3 selected advertiser having a web page and each of a plurality of candidate advertising outlets,
4 the fraction of visitors to the web page of the selected advertiser that also visited the
5 candidate advertising outlet,
6 such that the contents of the data structure may be used to select a candidate advertising
7 outlet on which to place an advertising message for the selected advertiser.

1 23. One or more computer memories collectively containing an advertising
2 outlet inclination data structure, the data structure containing information indicating, for a
3 selected advertiser having a web page and each of a plurality of candidate advertising outlets,
4 the fraction of visitors to the web page of the selected advertiser that both (a) visited the
5 candidate advertising outlet and (b) did not view an advertising message for the advertiser,
6 such that the contents of the data structure may be used to select a candidate advertising
7 outlet on which to place an advertising message for the selected advertiser.

1 24. One or more computer memories collectively containing an advertising
2 outlet inclination data structure, the data structure containing information indicating, for a
3 selected advertiser having a web page and each of a plurality of candidate advertising outlets,
4 the fraction of visitors to the web page of the selected advertiser that also visited the
5 candidate advertising outlet before first viewing an advertising message for the advertiser,
6 such that the contents of the data structure may be used to select a candidate advertising
7 outlet on which to place an advertising message for the selected advertiser.

1 25. A method in a computing system for assessing, for a selected electronic
2 advertiser and each of a plurality of candidate electronic publishers each having a website, a
3 measure of the desirability of placing with the candidate electronic publisher one or more
4 advertising messages for the selected candidate electronic advertiser, comprising:

5 selecting a distinguished electronic publisher that produced favorable results
6 when an advertising message for the selected electronic advertiser was earlier placed on the
7 distinguished electronic publisher, the distinguished electronic publisher having a website;

8 for each of a plurality of users, storing a user identifier on a computer system
9 used by the user, the number of stored user identifiers constituting a first quantity;

10 when one of the plurality of users visits the distinguished electronic publisher
11 advertiser website, receiving and storing an indication of a first type indicating that the user
12 visited the distinguished electronic publisher website, the indication containing the user
13 identifier stored on the computer system used by the user;

14 when one of the plurality of users visits the website of one of the plurality of
15 candidate electronic publishers, receiving and storing an indication of a second type
16 indicating that the user visited the candidate electronic publisher website, the indication
17 containing the user identifier stored on the computer system used by the user and an
18 identifier of the candidate electronic publisher;

19 selecting the user identifiers contained in stored indications of the first type;

20 determining the number of unique selected user identifiers, constituting a
21 second quantity;

22 for each of the candidate electronic publishers,

selecting stored indications of the second type that contain an identifier of the candidate electronic publisher;

determining the number of unique user identifiers that are contained in at least one of the selected indications of the second type, constituting a third quantity;

determining the number of unique user identifiers that are contained in at least one of the selected indications of the second type that are also selected, constituting a fourth quantity;

dividing the product of the first and third quantities by the product of the second and fourth quantities to obtain an affinity metric for the candidate electronic publisher;

analyzing the affinity metrics obtained for the candidate electronic publishers;

and

selecting one or more of the candidate electronic publishers on which to place an advertising message for the advertiser based upon the analysis.

26. The method of claim 25 wherein candidate electronic publishers for which an affinity greater than one is obtained are selected.

27. The method of claim 25 wherein candidate electronic publishers for which an affinity greater than five is obtained are selected.

28. A method in a computing system for assessing, for a selected advertiser and each of a plurality of candidate advertising outlets, a measure of the desirability of placing with the candidate advertising outlet an advertising messages for the selected advertiser, comprising, for each of the plurality of candidate advertising outlets:

identifying a distinguished advertising outlet as likely to produce a good result when an advertising message for the selected advertiser is place on the distinguished advertising outlet;

for each of the candidate advertising outlets, measuring the tendency of visitors to the distinguished advertising outlet to visit the candidate advertising outlet to obtain an affinity metric for the candidate advertising outlets; and

based upon an analysis of the affinity metrics obtained for the candidate advertising outlets, selecting one or more candidate advertising outlets on which to place an advertising message for the selected advertiser.

29. The method of claim 28, further comprising:

for each of a plurality of advertising outlets on which advertising messages for the advertiser have already been placed, generating a success metric characterizing the level of success attributable to placing an advertising message for the advertiser on the advertising outlet; and

using the generated success metrics to select one of the advertising outlets on which advertising messages for the advertiser have already been placed as the distinguished advertising outlet.

30. The method of claim 29 wherein the success metrics are generated based upon a click-through rate for advertising messages placed on the advertising outlet.

31. The method of claim 29 wherein the success metrics are generated based upon a conversion rate for advertising messages placed on the advertising outlet.

32. The method of claim 29 wherein the success metrics are generated based upon an average purchase amount for advertising messages placed on the advertising outlet.

33. The method of claim 29 wherein the success metrics are generated based upon an factor specified by the selected advertiser for advertising messages placed on the advertising outlet.

34. One or more computer memories collectively containing an advertising outlet affinity data structure relating to a selected advertiser and a selected advertising outlet on which an advertising message for the selected advertiser has been successfully placed, the data structure containing information indicating, for each of a plurality of candidate

5 advertising outlets, the extent to which visitors to the selected advertising outlet also visited
6 the candidate advertising outlet,
7 such that the contents of the data structure may be used to select one or more of the
8 candidate advertising outlet on which to place an advertising message for the selected
9 advertiser.

1 35. A method in a computing system for selecting advertising outlets on
2 which to place advertising messages for an advertiser, comprising:

3 for each of a first plurality of advertising outlets, assessing the rate at which
4 visitors to the advertiser also visit the advertising outlet;

5 selecting an advertising outlet among the first plurality having the highest rate;

6 for each of a second plurality of advertising outlets, assessing the tendency of a
7 high-performing advertising outlet to drive its visitors to the advertising outlet among the
8 second plurality of advertising outlets; and

9 selecting an advertising outlet among the second plurality of advertising outlets
10 to which the high-performing advertising outlet has the greatest tendency to drive its visitors.

1 36. A method in a data processing system for selecting advertising outlets at
2 which to advertise on behalf of an advertiser comprising:

3 for each of a plurality of advertising outlets, determining a first number of
4 consumers observed to visit the advertising outlet;

5 for each of the advertising outlets, of the number of different consumers
6 observed to visit the advertising outlet, determining a second number of consumers that also
7 visited the advertiser;

8 for each advertising outlet, dividing the second value by the first value to
9 obtain an inclination value; and

10 selecting advertising outlets at which to advertise on behalf of the advertiser
11 based on the inclination values of the advertising outlets.

